Universitatea din București

Facultatea de Jurnalism și Științele Comunicării

HABILITATION THESIS

Strategies of Legitimation in Public Relations.
Representations of Organizations and Perceptions of Publics

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the habilitation thesis *Strategies of Legitimation in Public Relations. Representations of Organizations and Perceptions of Publics* is meant to emphasize the importance of the dialogic communication between organizations and publics. Taking into account the themes to be approached, this habilitation thesis belongs to the domain of Communication Sciences.

It is structured in three parts: a) the scientific, professional and academic achievements which provide an insight into my research work carried out throughout the last years; (b) the career evolution and development plans that will be integrated into the general context of the current research work in the domain of Communication Sciences; c) references.

In the first chapter I highlighted my scientific research trajectory up to the present moment and my future academic and professional profile. The scientific research focused on the conceptual and empirical insights into the issue of organizational communication. Starting from my PhD thesis (*Persuasive Strategies in Political Discourse*) and continuing with my postdoctoral studies (*The Discourse of European Years. Communicational Practices in the Romanian Public Space*) I have tried to shape an interdisciplinary conceptual framework of

organizational communication which may be used in the analysis of various verbal and visual discourses provided by political, European, corporative, or (non)governmental organizations. I have developed two models of discourse analysis: *the discursive rubik cube* and *the integrated model of legitimation*.

In the *discursive rubik cube* model (Cmeciu, 2005) I explained the constitutive parts of a discourse through a metaphorical mapping: the visible faces (text, addressee, addresser) and the invisible faces (verisimilitude, addressee's power and addresser's power). By putting an emphasis on the invisible faces of the discursive rubik cube I have stepped out of the unidirectional communication framework and I have entered the realm of constructivist approaches and of social semiotics which provides meaning to power. The *integrated model of legitimation* (Cmeciu, 2014a) lays an emphasis on the discursive categories through which a group may legitimate itself. Having CDA (critical discourse analysis) and social semiotics as theoretical frameworks, this model highlights again the power position assigned to a member into a group, to a group into a society and to a society into the global context.

In the three parts of the first subchapter (*Scientific trajectory*) I presented the findings of the analyses of three types of discourse: political discourse, public and private organizational discourse and European discourse. In the subchapter *Political discourse* I provided insights into political discursive genres that were analyzed in my studies (posters, debates, websites, blogs, Facebook pages) and into the Romanian political discursive creativity (political bodily codes - hands as means of political involvement and the (de)legitimation of politicians through metaphors). Besides the findings of the content analyses, I laid an emphasis on visual framing and on the important role that intertextuality plays in the visual (de)legitimation of a political candidate. In the subchapter *The discourse of public and private organizations*, I presented the PR texts (mission, vision, annual reports, advertorials etc.) as discursive genres of identity representations, the dialogic communication through online strategies, CSR 2.0 and protests 2.0 and the media representations of organizational crises. Besides showing the efficiency of verbal and visual framing, I have designed various interpretative clusters for organizational social campaigns. In the subchapter *The European discourse* I presented the findings of the content analyses on various discursive genres (communication toolboxes, videos, posters) of the European Years' promotion and on EU platforms as means of dialogic communication with

European citizens. A research novelty was the use of a qualitative data analysis software in the interpretation of the thematic frames of European Years.

These three parts of the *Scientific trajectory* also included references to the studies I have been carrying out for the past 15 years: books published at well-known publishing houses (A2 - Polirom, Institutul European), chapters published at famous publishing houses from abroad (A1 & A2 - IGI/Idea Group Publishing, Peter Lang, Bloomsbury, etc.) and from Romania (Tritonic, Institutul European), articles published in ISI journals with impact factor (*Public Relations Review*, *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*), in ISI journals indexed in Arts & Humanities (*Semiotica* and *European Legacy: Towards New Paradigm*), in journals indexed in international data bases from abroad (*Communication & Society/Comunicación Y Sociedad, International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*) and from Romania (*Revista română de jurnalism şi comunicare, Journal of Media Research, Revista română de comunicare şi relaţii publice, Styles of Communication* etc.).

The second chapter (*The professional and academic trajectory*) is centered on my professional experience (1999-present), my professional evolution and the activities in which I have got involved throughout the 15 years of didactic activity. I also mentioned the activities of editing a journal indexed in international data bases (*Styles of Communication*), run together with the Polish Academy of Sciences, the activities as: a) a member in the scientific committees of journals from USA and Poland; b) an expert in various evaluation committees; and c) a member in different projects.

In the second section of the habilitation thesis, I presented the scientific, professional and academic evolution and development plans starting from the main research areas identified in the first chapter. Taking into account that in the literature on organizational discourse the main focus has been placed on organizations 2.0 whose publics are directly involved in the process of shaping the meaning potential, my future research topics will be: the textual mediation through multimodality and hypermodality and the cultural mediation - publics as (de)legitimators of a network organization. As for the professional and academic plans, I intend to carry on the teaching activities at the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences, the editing of the journal *Styles of Communication*, to get involved in the supervision activity of PhD students at the Doctoral School on Communication Sciences (University of Bucharest), to organize scientific events and to apply for scientific projects.